

Behind it, along the wayside track, there came a man in a buggy, who pulled up his sweating steed.

"Have you seen the wreck?" he shouted.

"Yes," answered Driscoll. "I was aboard. My friend, Jim Driscoll, was killed, and that's enough for me. Are you a reporter?"

"Yes, I'm a newspaper man," answered the other. "Give me a short account while I rest my horse. Quick!"

"I will if you'll put Jim Driscoll down as dead," answered Driscoll. "Say Jim Driscoll of Boxville, Ill., was killed by breaking his neck, because I'm not a-going to break the news to his family."

The bargain was struck and Driscoll gave the other a five minutes' account of the wreck. Then he hurried along the line.

He caught a branch train at the junction, and finally, about eight o'clock the next evening, attired in a shabby suit which he had purchased at a pawnbroker's, he made his way in the dark through the streets of Boxville. Nobody who passed in the gathering darkness recognized Driscoll in the shabby, slouching stranger.

He pushed open the garden gate and crept to the outside of the parlor window. Inside he saw a small crowd of neighbors, but his wife was not there.

"It'll be a hard blow for Mary," one of the crowd was saying. "Poor Jim!"

Driscoll recognized him as the local druggist, with whom he had been on bad terms for years. He clenched his fists. He hated the man's hypocrisy even more than himself.

"Now there's many talks against Jim, but he wasn't such a bad fellow," broke in the shoemaker. He was a man named Austin, with whom Driscoll had had a feud of several months' standing, on account of a business misunderstanding. "When a man's cranky folks makes allowances for him. I tell you, a man who can

keep the love of a woman like Mary Driscoll must have some good in him—it stands to reason."

"It's a pity there wasn't no children," sighed Miss Hemans, the sister of the butcher. "That's what ate into their hearts like acid. But I guess that if he lives Mary Driscoll will be so overjoyed that life'll take on a happier look for her."

"No chance of his recovering, is there?" asked Austin.

"A small one," said the butcher. "The doc says that if he recovers consciousness he'll most likely get well. It seems there's a splinter of bone pressing on his brain, and they can't tell how much it's injured him. If he recovers consciousness, the brain's all right; if he don't—well, he won't, that's all."

"Did Mary Driscoll write that?" asked another.

"Sure. She wrote to Miss Hemans here."

Jim Driscoll was conscious of mingled emotions. The first was of shame and humiliation. Of all the neighbors gathered there, not one had a bad word for him. Could it be possible that his wife had gone to the hospital and actually mistaken another man for himself?

Or was somebody lying? That was a more probable explanation. Of course! It was a lie. His impulse was to run into the room, but he restrained himself, and he heard another speaker say:

"I tell you, Miss Hemans, when I saw Mary Driscoll start off this morning, she looked actually pretty in that black dress of hers, in spite of her sorrow. She was crying, and she couldn't hide it, but she looked like a girl again. Sorrow seems to bring back the youth in some people."

"She's had sorrow enough," broke in the first sneering voice that Driscoll had heard. "Living with a man like Jim is enough to make any woman wish she was dead."

Driscoll knew the speaker. He was the cashier of the local bank, and